

Cheboygan have taken enormous pride in the *Mackinaw* as the ship and her crew worked to keep shipping lanes open. In its first year of service, the ship opened waterways nearly six weeks ahead of schedule, which allowed vital cargo to reach its destination and kept our nation's war machine running at top capacity.

As the nation shifted to peacetime production, the *Mackinaw* kept up its wartime pace. It continued to break up ice several feet thick every spring to ensure the safe arrival of essential raw materials for the steel and auto industries of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan. The *Mackinaw* has seen the extraordinary expansion of American industry, and made an extraordinary contribution to that expansion.

Mr. Speaker, my most fond memory of the *Mackinaw* is the bitterly cold winter of 1993–1994. During that winter, the *Mackinaw* showed her brute ice-breaking strength time and time again. The *Mackinaw* freed countless vessels from frozen icy impasses. She has rescued stranded boaters, provided safe passage, and even rescued animals in peril.

Staff of the *Mackinaw* so admire the vessel and the Cheboygan community that they gather every five years for a reunion of current and past shipmates.

Mr. Speaker, the *Mackinaw* and her crew have played a role not only in national and international commerce, but also in more local relationships. The crew of the *Mackinaw* has long been an important part of the community in Cheboygan, with members pitching in to fight fires, forming relationships with residents, and many even settling in Cheboygan after their retirement.

As we move closer to 2006 when this historic vessel is decommissioned and replaced with a new cutter *Mackinaw*, Mr. Speaker, I ask the House to join me in paying tribute to the U.S. Coast Guard cutter *Mackinaw* and her crews over the last 60 years. They deserve our deepest gratitude, and I wish them well when they gather next month to celebrate 60 years of fond memories.

#### PROPOSED AMERICAN HEALTH BENEFITS PROGRAM

**HON. JAMES R. LANGEVIN**

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 2004

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of a health care proposal that I am proud to introduce.

For years now, elected officials at all levels of government have struggled to address the nation's health-care crisis, and meet the ever-increasing demand for affordable health care. A significant part of the population lacks access to the most basic health coverage. In 2002, 43.6 million Americans were uninsured—80 percent of whom were members of working families. Closing this gap is one of the greatest domestic challenges our nation faces.

As health-insurance premiums rise each year, businesses face difficult decisions. To maintain the same level of coverage, they must either cover these extra costs or pass them along to employees. Many business owners confront an even starker choice: Decrease benefits or drop coverage altogether.

Those of us in Congress have a responsibility to ensure that no family is forced to go

without health coverage. My proposal for meaningful health care reform requires a commitment from the government to act in the best interest of its citizens.

A national template for this type of coverage—one that every Member of Congress is intimately familiar with—already exists: the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program (FEHBP). Through the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the federal government manages health insurance for more than 8 million federal employees, retirees and dependents. This program, composed of private insurance carriers, is administered by the federal government, which assumes responsibility for approving or disapproving carriers, negotiating benefit and rate changes, and auditing carriers' operations under the law. With incredibly low administrative costs and a below-average annual premium increase, the federal government has been able offer a wide variety of choices and protections to its employees and Members of Congress.

My legislation offers a framework for a system wherein all Americans are offered the opportunity to participate in an FEHBP-style program—called the American Health Benefits Program (AHBP). Under this design, all Americans not eligible for existing federal programs—such as TRICARE, Veterans Health Programs, Indian Health Services, Medicare and Medicaid will be required to participate. The government will provide a defined contribution toward every enrollee's premium and actively manage and regulate the process of informed consumer choice, motivating private insurance companies to produce a favorable combination of efficiency and equity. Plans will compete for enrollees on the basis of benefits as well as efficiency, service and price.

Employers will be relieved of the annual burden of having to negotiate new health care packages for their employees. They will continue to play a critical role in the health care system through a flat tax on payroll—which promises to be more stable and consistent than premiums offered to them by insurance companies.

It is time we started offering every American the kind of coverage and oversight that we, as Members of Congress, have come to rely upon. Health care is much more than an issue that polls well with voters. As elected officials, we must take the incremental steps needed to develop a universal health-care system that is affordable, high-quality and well managed.

I firmly believe that health care is a basic inalienable right of every American. If we work together to address this critical issue, I know we can realize this goal.

#### HONORING LUKE PALDER ON THE COMPLETION OF HIS INTERNSHIP

**HON. BART GORDON**

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 2004

Mr. GORDON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Luke Palder on the completion of his internship. Luke has been a tremendous help to me and my staff while he has interned in my Washington, DC, office this summer.

This is Luke's second summer as an intern for a member of the House of Representatives, which is remarkable when you consider

that Luke will begin his senior year of high school this fall.

Luke dedicates himself to excellence, and he commits himself fully to every project he undertakes. His internship in my office has been no exception. He has received the highest praise from constituents who have toured the U.S. Capitol with him. And he has proven himself to be a valuable addition to the office.

Luke treats everyone he meets with kindness and respect. With his dedication and determination, I am sure that he will be successful in every endeavor he pursues. I wish him all the best in the future.

#### PAYING TRIBUTE TO RAY DOMENICO

**HON. SCOTT MCINNIS**

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 2004

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to honor Ray Domenico of Welby, Colorado. Ray recently passed away from a stomach illness at the age of seventy-four. He will be remembered as the consummate farmer and a true American patriot. It is my privilege to recognize the life and memory of Ray before this body of Congress and this nation.

Ray was born and raised on a farm in Welby, Colorado. Following high school, Ray enlisted in the United States Navy and proudly served our country on a destroyer during the Korean War. After returning from the war, Ray returned to his roots and worked on his family farm. Ray spent many hours out of the day cultivating both fruits and vegetables. He was known for his work ethic, and he instilled the ethic in his children by leading through example.

For Ray, family was the most important part of his life. When he returned home from the Korean War he married Agnes in 1954. Ray and Agnes had known each other for most of their lives, since Agnes grew up on the neighboring farm. The couple raised a large family of thirteen children, with an even larger second generation comprised of thirty-eight grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, the Welby community will sorely miss Ray Domenico. Throughout the farm community, he will be known for his hard work and dedication to the cultivation of his crops. In this difficult time of bereavement, I wish to express my deepest condolences to his family and friends.

#### REMEMBERING ROY BURKE "R.B." HEAD, JR.

**HON. RALPH M. HALL**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 2004

Mr. HALL. Mr. Speaker, I am honored today to pay tribute to an outstanding citizen and beloved family man, the late Roy Burke Head, Jr., of Whitesboro, who passed away on April 7 at the age of 92. A stranger to none, he was affectionately known to his friends and family as R.B. or simply "B."

R.B. was a kind and generous man who devoted his life to his family, his community, and